

Minutes of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission Meeting

Date: September 30, 2016
11:00am – 1:30pm
Town of Truro Community Center
7 Standish Way
North Truro, MA 02652

Members Present

Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay (Chair)
Representative Gail Cariddi (Speaker of the House Appointee)
Brian Bullock (At-Large)
Dave Christopolis (At-Large)
Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission)
Linda Dunlavy (Franklin Regional Council of Governments)
Corinne Fitzgerald (Senate President Appointee)
Donna Hamel (At-Large)
Nathaniel Karns (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)
Trish Settles (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning District Commission)
Judy Terry (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)
Bill Veno (Martha's Vineyard Commission)
Wendy Hudson (Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission)

Members Absent

Konnie Lukes (At-Large)

Others Present

Michael Benezra, DHCD
Paul McMorro, EOHED
Rita Farrell, MHP
Rus Lodi, MHP
Carsten Snow, MHP
Tom McGarr, USDA
David Panagore, Town Manager, Provincetown
Michelle Jarusiewicz, Housing Specialist, Provincetown
Bob Weinstein, Selectman, Town of Truro

Welcome and Introductions

Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay (Chair) welcomed members of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission and briefly described the responsibilities.

Adoption of Remote Participation Policy

The Commission voted to adopt the Remote Participation Policy established under the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law.

Presentation outlining the achievements of the new Economic Development law by Paul McMorrow (EOHED)

Paul McMorrow of EOHED delivered a presentation that included information about the programs established and funded through the Economic Development bill, which was recently signed into law by Governor Baker. See attached Power Point presentation (also posted at www.mass.gov/dhcd)

Reports back from Commission Working Groups

At the June 10th meeting, the Commission established four working groups and asked for coordinators of each working group to meet at minimum, one time before the September 30th meeting. The working groups delivered their reports and findings back to the full commission. Each group organized their reports by identifying key issues, conducting research and offering next steps.

Infrastructure*Membership*

- Dave Christopolis (Coordinator)
- Brian Bullock
- Trish Settles
- Judy Terry
- Bill Veno

Key Issues

- Transportation
- Energy
- Agriculture
- Investing Town Center Development
- Broadband

Research/Findings

- Studied best practices from other states
- Met with officials from the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI)

Next Steps

- Identify infrastructure and implementation dollars
- Advocate for Rural Budget (Commission)
- Build database with all rural cities and towns in Massachusetts

Economic Development

Membership

- Rep. Gail Cariddi (Coordinator)
- Councilor Konnie Lukes
- Linda Dunlavy
- Wendy Hudson

Key Issues

- Forestry
- Manufacturing
- Infrastructure
- Agriculture
- Access to Broadband

Research

- Lack of entrepreneurial culture in rural areas
- Need for small business support
- Lack of capacity for rural towns to implement state incentive programs
- 45 Towns are left (total) without broadband
- Private Sector options are being discussed across the state. Examples include companies like Ataxia. This company builds infrastructure and guarantees revenue. This idea is something that has permeated around the state.

Housing

Membership

- Corinne Fitzgerald (Coordinator)
- Donna Hamel
- Jay Coburn

Key Issues

- Infrastructure
- Regulatory Barriers to Housing Production
- Need for Housing Expertise in Municipalities
- Demand for Affordable/Community and Workforce Housing
- Unique needs for Affordable Housing in Seasonal Communities
- Lack of subsidies for community scale affordable rental & ownership development
- Resources for communities to help LMI & elderly homeowners (Housing Rehab)
- Access to Broadband

Research

- Lack of water and sewer infrastructure to support new and existing housing (title V septic system)
- Expense of operating small public water systems per DEP regulations
- Need for workforce housing to provide millennials with viable housing options
- Student debt and wage stagnation contributing to impracticality of home buying options

- Housing Production recommendations to spur growth include:
 - Accessory Dwelling Units By-Right
 - Multi family Dwelling Units By-Right
 - Streamlined Permitting Process

Next Steps

- Better understanding of three types of rural housing markets as described by Mass Housing Partnership (Strong market; Average market; Weak market)
- Better understanding of State programs supporting or effecting housing production
- Identify other groups that are currently working on issues relating to rural housing for collaboration consideration

Workforce/Demographics

Membership

- Nathaniel Karns (Coordinator)
- Linda Dunlavy
- Trish Settles

Key Issues

- Different types of “rural” communities have different demographic & economic dynamics – need to understand those categories and dynamics for all working groups to formulate policies
- Workforce is also going to vary and need to spend focused time on that as well
- Community/Human Resources – in many towns, the ability to provide fundamental services, which rely almost entirely on volunteers, will be challenging

Research

- Reviewed reports on categories of rural communities across the country from UNH’s Carsey Institute
- Population Change, Single Family Home Value, Median Household Income, Under 18 and 65 & Older Populations (presentation)

Next Steps

- Trying to see if we can get a demographic workshop, perhaps using Carsey Institute at UNH or Donahue Institute at UMass, later in the fall; for RPAC members, legislators, other interested parties
- Pull together Workforce information; have reached out to Exec. Off. Of Labor & Workforce Development; will want to contact Regional Employment Boards at least in more rural regions
- Have to start to figure out how to tackle Community/Human Resource Issues

Uber Issues

- Broadband
- Defining “Rural”
- Title V (Sewer/Septic)
- Transportation

Scheduling the Second Meeting

The commission agreed to hold the next (third meeting) of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission on January 6th, 2017 at 11:00AM at the following location:

Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)
2 Washington Square – Union Station
Worcester, MA 01604
11am-3pm

Next Steps

The Chair and the commissioners agreed to the following action steps to take place before the third meeting of the commission in January of 2017.

- Post Next Meeting date to website
- Post Presentations from Paul McMorro and Nat Karns
- Each Working Group must select one Goal for their group to address
 - Explain how to achieve this goal
 - Describe what the commission needs in order to achieve this goal

Questions and Comments from the Audience

- Recommendation was made to have the commission partner with a policy or higher educational institution to allow for in-depth research and data collection
- Recommendation was made to support broadband development on Cape Cod
- Recommendation was made to create a smaller housing program to provide state assistance for developments with smaller units.
- Recommendation was made to research the former North Truro Air Force Base as a location for future housing production through a dialogue with the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Undersecretary Adjourned the Meeting at 1:30 pm